

Legislative Session 2003

Representative
LARRY CROUSE



Representative
LYNN SCHINDLER

Friends and neighbors,

We are both very proud to bring the needs and priorities of our Spokane Valley community before the state government in Olympia. We are your advocates in the state House of Representatives. To better serve you, please keep the calls, letters and e-mails coming. We value your advice and want to help address your concerns.

The state budget will again dominate the Legislative agenda this year. The solution to the state's ongoing budget "crisis" has always seemed simple to us – spend less and spend smarter.

Though we both intend to work in cooperation with the governor and legislators from both parties to tackle the state's many important issues, that does not mean we will ever abandon the principles you elected us to defend. We will continue to fight against any new tax increases, and will oppose all legislation that devalues human life or threatens our private property rights.

Our agenda is simple – to bring common-sense, real-world solutions to the many challenges facing the Legislature this year.

It is our hope that we can get the budget issue behind us quickly so we can move on to the real issue impacting Washington families – jobs, jobs, jobs. Priority number one is to build an economic environment that encourages entrepreneurs to start new businesses, help existing employers thrive and attracts employers from around the country to locate in Washington.

Rebuilding the Spokane-area economy means eliminating the government's many barriers to job creation:

1. Keep taxes low.
2. Reduce the job-killing regulations that drive businesses out of the state.
3. Make the state bureaucracy accountable to elected officials.
4. Strengthen public schools to ensure students receive a quality education.

During the 105-day legislative session in Olympia this year, we have a real opportunity to build public trust and change the way government does business. More than ever, we need your input as we begin the new legislative session. Inside this newsletter, you'll find important information on the state's budget deficit and the governor's budget proposal – and you'll also find our issue survey for 2003. Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey and mail it back to us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks again for your calls and letters.

Larry Crouse Lynn Schindler

Subscribe to our new Legislative E-mail Update

- See the results of our Spokane Valley budget survey.
- Get the most recent information on the state budget crisis.
- Track the key bills moving through the Legislature.
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 - private property rights?
 - state government priorities?

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Special Budget Report & Survey

Budget Update

The Washington State Legislature will once again be faced with the task of repairing a General Fund budget deficit. It is estimated this deficit could reach more than \$2.5 billion in the 2003-05 biennium.

The reasons given by the governor and other legislators for the budget deficit are many, and may be a bit too convoluted. Their reasons include a reduction in revenue due to the ongoing recession and the slow economic recovery. The state is also experiencing much higher costs for existing programs such as increasing enrollment in both our state universities and K-12 public schools, higher caseloads in the Department of Corrections and other programs of the Department of Social and Health Services, as well as soaring health care costs.

The real cause of the deficit, though, is much more simple — the state spends too much money. It tries to do too much. State government has more programs and more obligations than taxpayers have money to pay for. Last year's budget approved by the Legislature spent \$1.4 billion more than revenue.

The solution is not much different than what a Washington family would have to do in a similar situation. If income goes down, so does family spending. And if spending in one area goes up, such as heating costs in the winter, then spending in another area must go down. In other words, if you can't afford it, you don't buy it.

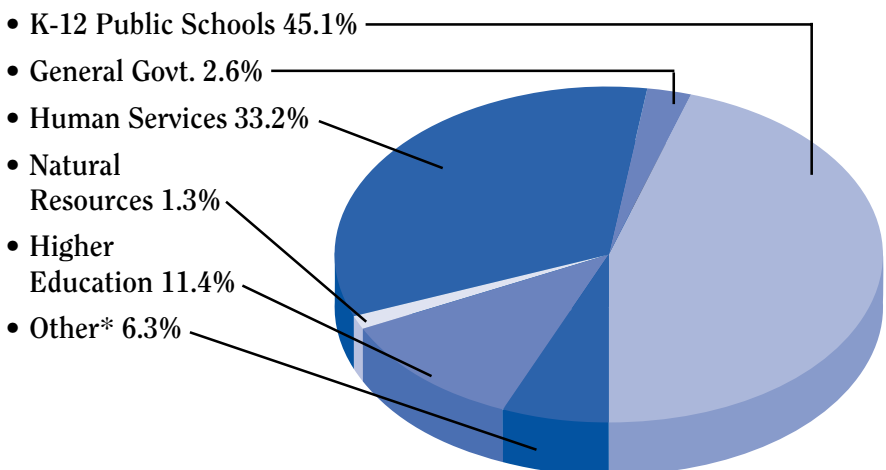
As legislators, we are both continually shocked that this simple logic escapes the grasp of the Legislature. In response to this deficit, Governor Locke has proposed a two-year, \$23 billion General Fund budget based on his "Priorities of Government" idea, which scrutinized state spending practices and tried to identify citizens' highest priorities for government. The current appropriation for the 2001-2003 Biennium is \$22.45 billion.

The governor's proposal contains no general tax increases and reduces anticipated spending by \$2.4 billion. The governor's budget reduction represents the difference between the money state government has and what it would cost to maintain all existing programs during the next two years.

The primary parts of the governor's budget proposal are:

- \$10.6 billion to K-12 public schools
- \$2.7 billion to the state's colleges & universities.
- \$3.7 billion to the public health system, which provides medical care for more than 900,000 children and adults, and pays for health insurance for 70,000 low-income people.
- \$3.8 billion for "safety net" programs. These include emergency food and housing, mental health care, foster care, and nursing homes, as well as programs for the disabled and temporary assistance to struggling families.
- \$1.4 billion for public safety, including the State Patrol and state prison system.
- A \$2.5 billion state construction budget.
- \$3 billion to preserve and maintain the state transportation system.
- The rest of the budget goes to other important goals: protecting natural resources, paying for general government services, debt service on construction bonds, the legislative branch of government and the justice system.

The Governor's proposed 2003-2005 budget*



* Includes debt service, pensions, other education, transportation, and special appropriations.

Citizen Government & Budget Survey

To best represent you in Olympia, please take a brief moment to complete the following survey & return it to us. Thank you!

Name: _____

Address: _____

☐ Please subscribe me to your Legislative E-mail Update! (We must have your e-mail address to send you our Legislative E-mail Update)

E-mail address: _____

1. What do you think are the most important functions of state government. Please rank from 1 to 7.

- _____ Legislative branch functions (maintaining legislative functions)
- _____ Judicial branch functions (operating the state court system)
- _____ Governmental Operations
- _____ Human Services (DSHS, foster care, programs for elderly, etc.)
- _____ Natural Resources (maintaining state forests, salmon protection programs, etc.)
- _____ Public Schools (K-12 education)
- _____ Higher Education (operating state universities and community colleges)
- _____ Other _____

2. How should the Legislature balance the \$2.5 billion budget deficit?

- _____ Increase taxes to protect current spending
- _____ Cut sending without increasing taxes
- _____ Some new taxes and some spending cuts

3. In what areas of state government would you support making cuts to reduce overall spending.

- _____ Legislative Branch (maintaining legislative functions)
- _____ Judicial branch functions (operating the state court system)
- _____ Government Operations (funds for statewide officials, boards and commissions, state buildings, etc.)
- _____ Human Services (Prison system, DSHS, foster care, programs for elderly, etc.)
- _____ Natural Resources (maintaining state forests, salmon protection programs, etc.)

_____ Public Schools (K-12 education)

_____ Higher Education (operating state universities and community colleges)

_____ Other _____

4. Would you support a new income tax to balance the state budget and pay for ongoing state government spending?

_____ Yes

_____ No

5. Local government receives 96 percent of property taxes to pay for schools, fire protection, local law enforcement, etc. Only 4 percent goes to state government. In your opinion, is the state portion of property taxes:

_____ Too low

_____ Somewhat fair and reasonable

_____ Too high

6. In response to our nation's new security threats, do you believe state government should create new safeguards for issuing a drivers license?

_____ Yes

_____ No

7. The passage of Initiatives 728 and 732 dramatically increased the cost of government, but they did not provide for the necessary revenue to pay for themselves. Would you support sending those initiatives back to a vote of the people along with the necessary revenue increase?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Please use as much space as you need to share your more detailed thoughts and recommendations regarding the state budget and state government in general:

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2003

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